

## A Homeric Hymn to *Homo Deus*: Interstellar Divine Negotiations in *Star Trek*

In Martin Winkler's *The Roman Salute*, Winkler briefly examines the *Star Trek* episode "Mirror, Mirror", in which the *Enterprise* crew discovers the Nation of Planets has been replaced with a government that uses intricately merged ideologies of the ancient Roman empire and Nazi Germany. While this episode offers a dystopian outlook to the classic "what if?" trope, several other episodes from the *Star Trek* series also integrate cultural relics of the Classical world. This presentation proposal, modeled after a recent book chapter we have been accepted for, compares the *Star Trek* episode "Who Mourns for Adonais?" with the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, exploring reasons why Apollo's offer to potential worshippers is accepted by the Ancient Greeks in the hymn but spurned by the *Enterprise* crew in the episode, leading to Apollo's demise.

We examine the fundamental shifts from Apollo's *do ut des* religious system intertwined with human obligations of *xenia* to a modern world with humanity's self-enfranchisement after the Scientific Revolution. Captain Kirk and his crew embody a humanistic mindset, while Apollo's proposal operates with outdated information on how humanity interprets the cosmos and their place in it. As a foil, the omnipotent Q's interactions with Picard's crew in *The Next Generation* provide useful comparisons, highlighting ways divinities can still be accepted by humanity. We explore how the dynamic has already begun to realign as the wisdom of *homo sapiens* upgrades and progresses ever closer to the agency of a *homo deus*, described in Harari's *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*.

In the time of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, humanity sought answers from divine forces for assistance in the world, negotiating reciprocal relationships where worship was exchanged for protection and graces. Thus, the Cretan sailors approached in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*

accept Apollo's proposal to be his priests. Millenia later post-Scientific Revolution, humanity believes it has agency to solve these problems themselves, opting to rely on human intuition and ability over agreements with occluded deities. Apollo's struggles to understand this lead to a stalemate with the *Enterprise*. Conversely, Q recognizes humanity's power and agency, and he assumes a trickster role in dealings with humanity—not seeking worship, nor readily offering aid. Thus, Picard and the crew of *The Next Generation's Enterprise* are occasionally able to work with Q for a common goal; he does not demand worship, so his destruction is not necessary for humanity to progress.

Clay and Spelman both remark on the unheroic Cretan priests and the disconnected, demeaning views that the Olympians had toward their mortal worshippers, illustrated by the Muses in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. The Cretans are elevated through interactions with Apollo, and Apollo approaches these negotiations wiser than his previous attempts. But the *Enterprise* crew, free from humanity's ancient *ethos*, realizes that they are more than comedic, tragic pawns in Apollo's story. As Asa attests in his chapter in *Star Trek and Sacred Ground*, the crew—Spock especially—believe in technology's power to triumph over the *passé* power of a “god” who offers only reward or punishment and is merely another life form. Consequently, Apollo is unable to adequately bridge the gap to bestow upon them the desired *timé*. Truly, as Kovacs notes in his chapter of *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction*, the death of Apollo is arguably a death not to just this divinity, but to *adonais* (i.e., *the divine itself*), replaced by the arguable moral superiority of Kirk and humanity. We take this conclusion a step further, integrating Harari's scholarship with the *Homeric Hymns* to explain *how* Kirk's crew has achieved moral superiority, having risen in the future further towards the destination of a *homo deus* than *we sapiens* in our past and present.

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